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The Three Scholars

Three names have been mentioned frequently in connection with the behind-the-scenes maneuvering which led to the disastrous Cuban invasion.

The mention has come from such varied sources as columnist James Reston of the New York Times Service and the newsletter Human Events.

The names are those of Walt W. Rostow, McGeorge Bundy and Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., all members of President Kennedy's "braintrust."

Mr. Reston calls them "sensitive and intelligent men." Human Events calls them advocates of "the soft approach" in foreign affairs. But both agree that the three had much to do with persuading President Kennedy to take the plunge into Cuba.

The Cuban invasion was attempted without proper staff work or adequate reflection or, as this newspaper sees it, plain common sense. It was a rash move, and yet, according to Mr. Reston, "the consequences of failure had never been considered."

Believers in "braintrusting" say the judgment of scholars is better than that of ordinary men. Military commanders, they say, are inclined to see their own point of view only; the State Department career people are geared to a special way of looking at things; and so are the agents of the CIA. Only scholars can take the long view.

But the three scholars, looking down from Olympus, gave their benign approval to the most scatterbrained, in some ways the most comical, in all ways the most tragic, of all recent American adventures in foreign policy.

In some quarters it has been argued that it is somehow improper to "snipe at" these amateurs in government.

On this point, John Denson, the plainspoken new editor of the New York Herald Tribune, recently wrote:

"If to hold them rigidly accountable (or 'snipe' at them) would bring on a spasm of anti-intellectualism, then there must be something wrong with 'intellectualism' in government."

We surmise similar thoughts may have occurred to President Kennedy.